

Is the FCC trying to encourage or destroy competition in the telecommunications industry? Based on the decision to relax line-sharing rules, I'd say that the FCC is trying to quash the last vestige of competition in broadband, and turn it all over to the baby bells, who have systematically tried to exploit their position as local monopolies to shut out competitors.

In case you haven't seen this is what your gift to the bells is being called on Slashdot ([www.slashdot.org](http://www.slashdot.org)):

"FCC Abandons Linesharing, Kills DSL Competition"

As a Covad subscriber for several years, I agree with them. I know for a fact that Covad pays MORE for the local loop they lease from Verizon, than I do for my home telephone (they're on separate lines, I'm not using that ADSL on the same line as my regular phone as most folks do.) Couple this with the fact that I can subscribe to a phone service over DSL ([www.vonage.com](http://www.vonage.com)) for an additional \$25, and the requirement that a company have to provide both voice and internet in order to lineshare is ridiculous. COMPETITION IS ALREADY HERE - and up until today, it was driving a healthy growth in businesses across the US. Although I get my local loop from Covad, I get internet access via Speakeasy ([www.speakeasy.com](http://www.speakeasy.com)). Couple that with regular telephone access via Vonage ([www.vonage.com](http://www.vonage.com)), and I have everything your decision is supposed to encourage. However, the consequence of your decision today gives Verizon (in my area) back their monopoly on voice and data, and destroys these three other businesses. A monopoly, I might add, which in the past has refused to allow number portability, DESPITE my paying a "number portability fee" for many years.

In summary, a data provider need not provide voice for there to be voice competition - all they have to do is provide a high speed connection, and voice competition will use that route to compete (as they already are, for both long distance and local service.) By giving the baby bells the decision they wanted, you have destroyed not only the broadband competition, but also the voice competition that relied on that broadband being available. Why would I subscribe to Vonage, if I used Verizon DSL (which requires that I have Verizon voice service)? I WOULDN'T. Whereas, with Covad, which runs their own loop WITHOUT voice, I can order whatever kind of voice service I want, given enough broadband bandwidth. Just so you know, I pay more for service through Covad/Speakeasy, but their quality of service is justifiably better (about \$87 per month for 384kbps up/768kbps down and 7 static IPs, vs. Verizon at \$39.99 and tax for a dynamic IP, a host of usage restrictions, plus the \$25 for the required phone line.).

If you doubt that the market has formed the correct impression of your decision (FCC kills broadband on behalf of the baby bells), take a look at Covad stock (COVD): A drop of 39.85% in ONE DAY. Making line-sharing available only to providers that also sell voice is silly and unnecessary, and frankly, incredibly stupid.